R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 012 086 CG 000 248

PROBLEMS IN THE MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MATURITY IN THE AMERICAN ADOLESCENT.

BY- GOINS, ALVIN E.

PUB DATE 20 MAR 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$0.48 12P.

DESCRIPTORS- *ADOLESCENCE, ADOLESCENTS, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT, *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY, INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY, SOCIAL MATURITY, DALLAS, SPEECHES, BIBLIOGRAPHIES

SOCIAL MATURITY IN THE AMERICAN ADOLESCENT IS DEFINED AS THAT PERIOD SOMEWHERE BETWEEN CHILDHOOD AND ADULTHOOD WHEN THE INDIVIDUAL HAS ACHIEVED THE ABILITY TO TOLERATE AND ADJUST TO FRUSTRATION WITHOUT STRESS WHILE ACHIEVING ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE, A TOLERANT OUTLOOK, AND A SATISFACTORY LIFE PHILOSOPHY. THE MEASURES OF SOCIAL MATURITY OF THE ADOLESCENT HAVE BEEN LARGELY BASED UPON THE MIDDLE-CLASS, WHITE, AMERICAN POPULATION WITH LITTLE EMPHASIS UPON CONTRASTS BETWEEN URBAN, RURAL, AND SMALL-TOWN ADOLESCENTS BY SOCIAL CLASSES. THE METHODS OF STUDYING ADOLESCENCE HAVE BEEN RATING TECHNIQUES (INVENTORIES, QUESTIONNAIRES, AND SCALES), SELF-REPORTING TECHNIQUES, ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES, CLINICAL STUDIES, AND EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS. BEFORE THIS AREA OF ADOLESCENT SOCIAL MATURITY CAN BE FURTHER EXPLORED, WE MUST KNOW MORE ABOUT ADOLESCENT SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, INTERESTS, PROBLEMS, AND DEVELOPMENTS. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE AMERICAN PERSONNEL AND GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION (DALLAS, MARCH 20, 1967). (RL)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED012086

PROBLEMS IN THE MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MATURITY IN THE AMERICAN ADOLESCENT[1]

by

Alvin E. Goins[2]

INTRODUCTION

The accurate evaluation and assessment of social maturity in American adolescents is certainly a proper and important task for the social sciences, particularly the guidance and counseling professions, for the adolescent period is one of the most important periods in human development and maturity in social relations is one of the most important areas of human behavior.

A review of the literature, however, revealed that despite the voluminous bibliography of developmental psychology, there have been relatively few empirical investigations of social maturity in the American adolescent, and there have been even fewer attempts to measure and assess this phenomenon. As a matter of fact, most of the books on adolescence make no reference to the topics of social maturity, or social competence, or socialization, or similar topics in their indexes nor treat the subject in their discussions. It was found that the assessment of social maturity in American adolescents has been hampered by all the traditional problems in testing and measurement, such as reliability, validity, standardization, criterion, etc., but primarily by a relative lack of research and analysis.

Therefore, I think these pioneers on the panel here with me today should be commended for adding their empirical data and for helping to establish the necessary foundation for further research in the area. They should be commended if for no other reason than their trail-blazing efforts in this relatively uncharted area; but I hasten to say that there are other reasons, for these researchers have done good research.

The subject matter is of great practical significance today, for if we can understand and measure social maturity in adolescents, we will be in a better position to guide our youth toward more responsible social behavior. We can get an idea of how valuable a contribution this is when we realize that well over half of the volume of crime committed in the United States today is committed by juveniles.

The review indicated that one set of problems at this stage of development in the measurement of social maturity in adoloescents centers around the clarification of concepts. While the terms social, maturity,

---

[1]Paper presented at the Association for Measurement and Evaluation in Guidance, American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention in Dallas, Texas, on March 20, 1967.

[2]Assistant Manager, Navy Selection Research Program, U. S. Bureau of Naval Personnel

CG 000 248

and adolescence have been defined adequately enough operationally, there is no universally accepted meaning of the concept maturity, especially when we add the modifiers "social" or "emotional" or "intellectual", etc., and when we refer to a specific age or developmental group.

This paper is intended to be heuristic primarily. In it we will attempt to examine the meaning of social maturity in adolescence, and attempt to summarize some of the major empirical studies of social development in American adolescents and discuss the assessment techniques used. This paper, then, will attempt to focus on and magnify for closer examination, some of the issues involved in the measurement and assessment of one aspect of human social development during the adolescent period.

DEFINITIONS OF SOCIAL MATURITY

What is social maturity? Is social maturity a separate meaningful dimension of the concept maturity, or is maturity in social situations just one aspect of the total meaning of maturity? If social maturity is a separate and distinct dimension of maturity, is it a mutually exclusive dimension? These questions have remained essentially unanswered but have a direct bearing on the assessment and measurement of social maturity.

Several authors (e.g., Nixon, 1952; Garrison, 1965; Cole & Hall, 1964; Kuhlen, 1952; Strang, 1957; Stone & Church, 1957; Hurlock, 1964 & 1967; Jahoda, 1958; Bernard, 1957) discuss the qualities of maturity in general. Kuhlen (1952) presents a rather comprehensive definition which seems appropriate to illustrate the difficulties of distinguishing a specific notion of social maturity. He states that maturity implies the achievement of optimal development in the various areas of adjustment and in the adjustment capacity itself. The mature person, eg, has achieved the ability to tolerate frustration and to make necessary adjustments to frustration without undue stress, and has achieved appropriate heterosexual adjustment, economic independence, a tolerant outlook, and a satisfactory life philosophy. In addition to these there must be progressive achievement of emotional independence from parents and family ties, often referred to as "emancipation" or "psychological weaning"; and the development of self-reliance, the capacity for independent self-direction. Kuhlen lists several characteristics for each aspect of maturity, but he does not give any adjectives to differentiate the aspects he is describing, although at later times, he does talk about social maturity. Ideally, a mature individual should be mature in all aspects, but this does not seem to be the usual case. The main difficulty seems to be in clearly differentiating the various types into mutually exclusive and meaningful categories.

Most of the specific definitions of social maturity are provided by those who have attempted to measure social maturity, since many of the authors of the books on adolescence and developmental psychologyy do not specifically discuss the topic. Doll (1943) defined social maturity in developmental terms. "Social maturation ... is the developmental evolution of behavior as revealed by the integrative expression of experience and learning for successive stages of adequacy in personal independence, interpersonal cooperation, and group responsibility." He

emphasized the growth in capacity to move away from one's own needs toward greater awareness of others and their needs.

Kassoff (1966) defines social maturity as "the capacity of the individual to relate himself adequately in a functional manner appropriate to his age within his own social group." By appropriate, Kassoff means "behavior based on the combination of physiological capacity for performance plus societal demands. Weitzman's definition also emphasized "socially significant behavior attained at a given age." (Weitzman, 1944)

Adolescent Social Maturity. What happens to the notion of social maturity when we add the adjective adolescent? Does the word adolescent signify a distinct type of social maturity stemming from the fact that adolescence is a distinct period in human development? If so, how does adolescent social maturity differ from any other type of social maturity such that it can and should be uniquely specified?

Before that, what do we mean by adolescence? The word adolescence is derived from the Latin verb adolescere which means to grow, to grow to maturity; so that the connection between the terms is historical. Most of us have a general idea of the time period encompassed by adolescence, but the period is by no means clearly fixed or limited. This is due principally to the unequal rate of development of individuals. However, one point on which all psychologists agree, is that the adolescent period lies somewhere between childhood and adulthood.

The modern trend in developmental psychology is to further divide the developmental spectrum into smaller units, and the adolescent period into early, middle, and late adolescence. One of the most quoted delineations of adolescence is that of Cole and Hall (1964) who delineate adolescence roughly as follows:

	Girls	Boys
Early adolescence	13-15	15-17
Middle adolescence	15-18	17-19
Late adolescence	18-21	19-21

Does this clarify or complicate the situation? Such delineation may clarify the situation when we realize that such approximate, convenient, non-discrete delineations correspond roughly to the discrete delineations of most school systems, such as, the junior high school, senior high school, and undergraduate college years.

Distinctiveness of the Adolescent Period. Now, back to the question of whether or not the adolescent period is a distinct developmental period in Western civilization. Cole and Hall (1964) note that only in recent years and primarily in American life has a "true" period of adolescence, extending for approximately ten years and aided by the extention of education and the delay in marriage, been possible. We are reminded that most primitive cultures do not have an adolescent period, only childhood and

adulthood with the demarcation line clearly fixed at puberty when special rites and ceremonies are performed to initiate the child abruptly into adulthood.

The notion that the adolescent period was a particularly unique and stressful period in human development was established early in American thinking by G. Stanley Hall, one of the pioneers in American psychology. "According to Hall, adolescence was the time when a 'new birth' occurred in the individual's personality ... These changes ... resulted from sexual maturity and were, thus, biologically generated ... Hall described the period as one of 'storm and stress', a time when the individual is erratic, emotional, unstable, and unpredictable." (Hurlock, 1967) This notion has persisted, aided by the Hall legacy, and lately by the increased attention devoted to adolescents with the growing number of books, articles, products, programs, and services aimed at adolescents and their parents. The notion was not challenged until researchers began to focus on the adolescent period and study some of the current assumptions and implications with controlled studies of large groups of adolescents from different social classes, culture and economic levels.

Most of the recent authors of the books on adolescence describe the adolescent period as a gradual transitional period which <u>may</u> be stressful, but usually is not. (I might note that this view seems to be less persuasive among those of psychoanalytic orientation.) Kuhlen (1952) summarizes that "the total analysis (of objective evidence and psychological research) leads to the conclusion that adolescence has been a highly over-dramatized phase of development that is not unusually stressful, that is characterized not so much by a distinctive 'psychology' as by a group of developmental problems, biological and social in origin, which typically, but not necessarily occur during the second decade of life." Cole and Hall (1964) support this summary by stating that the empirical evidence also seems to show that most adolescents solve their problems slowly by degrees and in normal growth of a normal individual, childhood fades, adolescence advances, and adulthood arrives in a gradual, smooth series of small changes and with only temporary and incidental difficulties and disturbances.

<u>Usefulness of Concept of Adolescent Social Maturity</u>. Although some questions involving the concept of adolescent social maturity remain unsolved, the concept has been used and defined by those attempting to measure adolescent social maturity so that the term has operational significance.

Also, the adolescent period has been described as the true beginning of the importance of the social situation. During adolescence, striking shifts of interest occur in the social world. With this change in the social world new traits assume social significance and traits once having prestige value may no longer be admired. Near the beginning of the adolescent period a boy or girl achieves sexual maturity, and there emerges a marked interest in the opposite sex. By the end of adolescence, physical

growth is complete and intellectual growth very nearly so. Only severe deprivation can prevent a human organism from reaching adult size, shape, and function, or from growing into its expected mental maturity. The real problems of adolescence are, therefore, emotional, social, moral, and economic maturity. Thus, the adolescent years are, pre-eminently, a period of social development and adjustment. (Kuhlen & Thompson 1963)

The importance of the social world on an individual is described by Kuhlen and Thompson (1963). They feel that perhaps no aspect of an individual's life is more important to his social adjustment, to his sense of personal worth, and to his general effectiveness as his ability to establish and maintain adequate social relations and status with others. Also, the social impact of others upon the individual represents one of the major factors in developing in him the personality traits characteristic of a particular culture.

MEASURES OF SOCIAL MATURITY

We have noted that when considering the vast literature and research on adolescence and developmental psychology, the attempts to measure social maturity in adolescents have been relatively small. We may say that the area of adolescent social maturity itself seems to be in its early adolescence and in a stage of immaturity. (Maybe we could introduce the notion of "scientific area maturity.")

Dr. Kassoff has alluded to some of this literature in his paper today; the work of Doll (1943), of Weitzman (1944, 1941), and the work of Kassoff (1966) being prominent. Since Dr. Kassoff has adequately covered these studies, there is no need to repeat them.

Most of the measurement and testing problems involved in the measures of social maturity in adolescence can be stated rather succinctly. In all the measures of social maturity, none deals with the measurement problem of reliability. That is, none attempts to determine the extent to which the measures are repeatable over time or over individuals. As far as validity is concerned, all are porported to be valid only for the middle-class white American adolescent population. This is no reflection; this simply is as far as the assessment of social maturity in the American adolescent has advanced. Nevertheless, such a limited sampling limits their application for the measurement of social maturity in the general American adolescent population. Kuhlen (1952) observed this limitation of research on adolescents in all areas of behavior and noted that research on the adolescent has yielded mainly a "psychology" of the urban middle-class adolescent. Little information has been obtained regarding contrasts between urban, rural, and small-town adolescence or between adolescence in various social classes. (We are pleased to have this addition by Mr. Kaiser today.)

Another measurement and testing problem in this area is that of criterion. So far, most of the criterion measures have been based on the mean adolescent behavior for the various aspects or dimensions of social maturity. Many authors have stated that although there are some common trends among adolescents as a group, an individual adolescent's behavior in these areas is quite variable and with wide ranges, and there is no typical individual adolescent who corresponds to the mean of all the adolescent characteristics.

STUDIES OF ADOLESCENT SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

It seems that before we can clearly understand and advance further in the area of adolescent social maturity, we need to know more about adolescent social behavior, interests, problems, and development. We also need much more empirical data of various types and degrees of adolescent social behavior in the various sub-groups. These data are certainly necessary if we are to attempt to manipulate and guide adolescent social behavior toward a more absolute standard of maturity.

Methods of Studying Adolescents. Students of adolescent psychology have made use of various methods and techniques for gathering data on the development, activities, and problems of adolescents and these studies have provided valuable data for use in interpreting the growth, development, and social characteristics of adolescents. The methods used by different investigators depend upon the nature of the problems, materials, and subjects available, and training and experience of the investigators. (Garrison 1965). These various techniques may be classified in all sorts of schemes, but no schema will be attempted here. It seems suffice to list some of the techniques as they have been described or listed and discuss them within this outline.

Several types of rating techniques (also called inventories, questionnaires, and scales) have been used, both self-ratings and ratings by others. There have been studies based essentially on retrospective reports by adults as raters. This was essentially the technique of Doll (1943). G. Stanley Hall approached the study of adolescent development essentially using adolescent diaries (Hurlock 1967), and Kiell (1963) used autobiographies, publications and letters in addition to diaries. Kiell's writings are from many nations and cultures and span the centuries from antiguity to the present.

In recent years, various other self-report techniques have been used. A popularly-written book by Maureen Daly (1951) presents a series of self-reports, in response to interview, by a "cross-section" of American youth. Ruth Strang (1957) in a book titled, "The Adolescent Views Himself" collected and analyzed thousands of compositions written by high school students on topics proposed by the researcher. In a prize-winning manuscript by Rosenberg (1965), reported to be the results of the first systematic large-scale questionnaire survey focusing exclusively on the way adolescents see and feel about themselves, over 5000 high school

students of different social, religious, and national backgrounds were studied to show the effect of family experience, neighborhoods, minority groups, etc. on their self-image and response to society. Remmers and Radler (1957) also report the compilation of the findings from 49 individual polls covering over 15 years of nation-wide questionnaire surveys of the attitude and beliefs of 18,000 adolescents on almost every subject. A similar recent survey was published by Douvan and Adelson (1966). This study was based on two national interviews with over 3000 adolescent boys and girls conducted by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. Coleman (1961) assessed the replies from separate questionnaires to students, parents, and teachers supplemented with interviews and on-the-scene observations.

Another important source of information has been anthropological studies where it is possible to note if a particular mode of behavior or process of development is universal, or to note the influence of culture. In studies of this type, the anthropological technique of observation and recording of natural behavior is primarily used. Gottlieb, Reeves, etal (1966) present one of the most recent and comprehensive surveys of the literature on adolescence on a world scale and provide a guide for assessing the findings on adolescent behavior throughout the world.

There have been major studies of a more clinical nature, using projective techniques and other personality measures. Symonds (1949) used a variant of the Thematic Apperception Test to study adolescent fantasies and "threw light on the nature of adolescence from data ... that had not previously been used in studying adolescence." In a follow-up (longitudinal) study to determine the predictive value of the tests, autobiographies, interviews and other data were collected on subsequent adult experiences. (Symonds & Jenkins, 1961) Hathaway and Monachesi (1963) obtained data on a large number of adolescents using the MMPI, a personality test. Kagan and Moss (1962) presented a longitudinal investigation of a large number of normal adults for whom youth records (covering the ages from birth through adolescence), including standard mental and personality tests, interviews, and observations both in the home and in social settings, were available. The adult records also contained test and interview data.

One recent and hopeful trend which begins to approach the experimental technique and should give great impetus to the practical, applied values of the studies on adolescence is the trend to relate the various findings to outside criteria. That is, to attempt to determine what maturity in a given area means. This may be done by observing and measuring individuals who are rated "mature" and comparing their characteristic behaviors with that of individuals who are rated as "immature." One important and recent study in this area is by Douglas Heath (1965) titled, "Explorations of Maturity: Studies of Mature and Immature College Men." It is claimed that this is "the only study that systematically explores the meaning of maturity and seeks to verify empirically its hypotheses." The book demonstrates what one type of research can produce empirically when pursued and exploited to its limits and suggests a number of new tests designed to measure different aspects of mature self-organization and effective adaptations.

These are just a few of the various types of studies reported as books in the recent literature; there are many others and there are many other techniques which have been used. I might add that each technique has its limitations. (cf Garrison, 1965) This is one reason why we have to use all sorts of techniques, and to collect all sorts of data, so that we can begin to synthesize, discover underlying principles and move forward in the field.

From the data we do have available, several attempts have been made to organize the data on adolescence into meaningful categories. I quote Kuhlen again because as editor of the Journal of Educational Psychology and editor and author of recent books in Developmental Psychology, (Kuhlen & Thompson 1963) he is in a good position to know the current status of research in the area. He feels that the major problems which characterize adolescence may be conveniently grouped into four areas: (1) sex-social adjustment, (2) ideological adjustment, (3) vocational adjustment, and (4) those adjustments relating to the achievement of freedom from parents. He notes further that these types of adjustments are so characteristically adolescent that it might be said that regardless of actual chronological age, an individual is preadolescent in (development) before problems of these sorts are encountered, he is adolescent to the extent that he is in the process of making these types of adjustments, and he is adult to the extent that he has successfully solved these transitional difficulties and eliminated them as problems.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We have said that this paper was primarily heuristic, designed to raise, but not necessarily solve a number of issues in the measurement and assessment of social maturity in American adolescents. I hope I have raised enough issues. All of these issues deserve a great deal of reflection and analysis, but one thing seems clear. Before we can begin to solve the issues raised here today, we will have to collect, analyze, and synthesize more empirical data. Perhaps we have suggested some of the types of data that are necessary and useful.

The measurement and assessment of social maturity has a long way to go. By comparison, it is immediately obvious that the area is not nearly so highly developed as that of intelligence testing, or proficiency and achievement measurement, or personality measurement, or attitude assessment. However, the task is immediately important, particularly in view of the number of adolescents needing guidance and the number and rise in juvenile crime and delinquency.

We have attempted mainly to raise questions to help clarify some of the concepts involved because clarification of these concepts is closely related to the direction and guidance of the measurement and assessment which will follow. Again, I'd like to commend my colleagues and hope to become involved with them in further explorations in the measurement of social maturity in adolescents.

REFERENCES

Bernard, H.W. Adolescent Development in American Culture. World Book Co.,1957

Cole, Luella & Hall, Irma Psychology of Adolescence. Holt, Rinehart &Winston, 1964

Coleman, J.S. The Adolescent Society: The Social Life of the Teenager and Its Impact on Education. Free Press, 1961

Daly, Maureen (editor) Profiles of Youth. Lippincott, 1951

Doll, E.A. The Measurement of Social Competence. Education Testing Bureau,1943

Douvan, Elizabeth & Adelson, J. The Adolescent Experience. Wiley, 1966

Garrison, K.C. Psychology of Adolescence. Prentice-Hall, 1965

Gottlieb, D., Reeves, J., & Ten Houten, W. The Emergence of Youth Societies: A Cross Cultural Approach. Free Press, 1966

Hathaway, S.& Monachesi, E. Adolescent Personality and Behavior. University of Minnesota, 1963

Heath, D.C. Explorations of Maturity: Studies of Mature and Immature College Men. Appleton-Century-Crofts,1965

Hurlock, Elizabeth Developmental Psychology. McGraw-Hill, 1964

Hurlock, Elizabeth Adolescent Development. McGraw-Hill, 1967

Jahoda, Marie Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health. Basic Books, 1958

Jersild, A.T. The Psychology of Adolescence. Macmillan, 1963

Kagan, J & Moss, H.A. Birth to Maturity: A Study in Psychological Development. Wiley, 1962

Kassoff, A.J. Development of a Social Maturity Scale for Adolescents. Unpubl. doctoral dissertation, The American University, 1966

Kiell, N. The Universal Experience of Adolescence. Internat. Univ. Press,1963

Kuhlen, R.G. Psychology of Adolescent Development. Psychometric Affill,1952

Kuhlen, R.G. & Thompson, G.G. (editors) Psychological Studies of Human Development. Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963

Nixon, R.E. The Art of Growing: A Guide to Psychological Maturity. Random House, 1962

Remmers, H.E. & Radler, H. The American Teenager. Bobbs-Merrill, 1957

Rosenberg, M. Society and the Adolescent Self-Image. Princeton University, 1965

Stone, N.J. & Church, J. Childhood and Adolescence. Random House, 1957

Strang, Ruth The Adolescent Views Himself: A Psychology of Adolescence. McGraw-Hill, 1957

Symonds, P. Adolescent Fantasy. Columbia University Press, 1949

Symonds, P. & Jensen, P. From Adolescent to Adult. Columbia University Press, 1961

Weitzman, E. "Note on a Test of Social Competence," J. Appl. Psychol., 1941, 25, 595-596.

Weitzman, E. Inventory of Social Behavior. Sheridan Supply Co., 1941

Weitzman, E. "A Study of Social Maturity in Persons Sixteen Through Twenty-four Years of Age," J. Genet. Psychol., 1944, 64, 37-66.